



# Emergency Contraception after Sexual Assault:

## Five Key Facts for Survivors

Hospital emergency departments (EDs) in Massachusetts must offer emergency contraception (EC) and this medically and factually accurate information to female sexual assault survivors whether or not they have filed a police report or completed a rape examination kit. *If EC pills were not provided at your ED visit today, please see the next page for help.*

### 1 Emergency Contraception (EC) is a type of birth control pill that can help prevent pregnancy after sexual assault, rape, or unprotected sex.

- Taking EC as soon as possible after an assault can **lower your chances of getting pregnant.**
- EC is effective **up to 5 days (120 hours) after sexual assault or rape.** It's sometimes called "the morning after-pill," but it's best to take EC as soon as possible.

### 2 Emergency Contraception (EC) is safe and effective.

- **Millions of women have safely used EC** to prevent unintended pregnancies for over 30 years.
- Some women also learn how to use daily birth control pills as EC. Learn more at [www.mariatalks.com/ec-birth-control-pills](http://www.mariatalks.com/ec-birth-control-pills).

### 3 EC works by keeping an egg from leaving the ovary.

- **Just like daily birth control pills,** EC may also keep the sperm from meeting the egg. However, it cannot stop a fertilized egg from attaching to the lining of the uterus.
- EC is not the abortion pill and will not cause an abortion.



### Don't Wait!

**Take EC as soon as possible to prevent pregnancy after sexual assault.**

### 4 There are 2 types of Emergency Contraception (EC) pills that are FDA approved for use.



#### Plan B One-Step™ and Next Choice™

(progestin-only pills) can be **sold at pharmacies without a prescription** to men and women 17 or older. These pills:

- reduce the risk of pregnancy by 88%
- are **most effective** at preventing pregnancy **for the first 3 days** after sexual assault or rape but can still help to reduce the risk of pregnancy on the 4th or 5th day.

Research shows that this type of EC will not end an existing pregnancy, does not cause birth defects, and can be safely used by breastfeeding women. *If you find out later that you were pregnant when you took this type of EC, it will not harm you or your pregnancy.*

It will not affect your ability to become pregnant in the future.



#### ella® (ulipristal acetate) is **available with a prescription** from a doctor. ella®:

- is **highly effective** at preventing pregnancy **for the first 5 days** after sexual assault or rape
- **may be more effective** at preventing pregnancy **than progestin-only pills**, especially if it's been 4 or 5 days since the assault
- might make hormonal birth control methods (like the pill, ring, or patch) less effective right after taking it. As with all EC, a back-up birth control method (like a condom) should be used if possible until your next period starts.

ella® was FDA approved in 2010. **More research is needed to learn if pregnant and breastfeeding women can safely use ella®.** Before choosing ella®, you may want to take a pregnancy test to find out if you were already pregnant before the assault.

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## 5 After taking EC, some women may experience mild, short-term side effects.

- You may have more or less bleeding than normal with your next period. Your next period may start earlier or later than normal. **If your period is more than 1 week late, you may be pregnant, and should take a pregnancy test.**
- You may experience nausea, stomach pain, headache, fatigue and dizziness, similar to the side effects of daily birth control pills. **If you have severe, long-lasting stomach pain after taking EC, call your doctor right away.**
- Your doctor can give you medication to help prevent nausea. **If you vomit within 2-3 hours of taking a dose of EC, call your doctor to see if you need to take another dose.**
- After taking EC, it is highly recommended to use a back-up birth control method if possible, such as a condom, until your next period starts.

The doctor or nurse can answer any questions you may have about EC.



## Don't Wait!

Take EC as soon as possible to prevent pregnancy after sexual assault.

## Still need help getting low-cost Emergency Contraception (EC) or other confidential support services?

- Call a **Rape Crisis Center** at 1-800-841-8371 (English) or 1-800-223-5001 (Español), or visit [www.surviverape.org](http://www.surviverape.org)
- Call the **Statewide Sexual Health Helpline** at 1-877-MA-SEX-ED (1-877-627-3933) or visit [www.mass.gov/emergencycontraception](http://www.mass.gov/emergencycontraception)



▶ **If you want EC right away**, visit a clinic or pharmacy or search online for the pills by name.

- Some Massachusetts pharmacists are trained to dispense EC to all women, including those **under the age of 17** or who do not have a valid ID, without a prescription. Find one at [www.mariatalks.com/ec-pharmacies](http://www.mariatalks.com/ec-pharmacies)



▶ **If EC was not offered at your ED visit today**, or you were told that you needed to complete a police report or rape examination kit first, you can file a formal complaint by:

- Calling the Massachusetts Department of Public Health **Division of Health Care Quality** at 1-800-462-5540



**Remember**, hospitals with Emergency Departments are required by law to offer EC to women seeking care after a sexual assault, whether or not a woman completes a rape examination kit or reports the assault to the police. If the ED doctor does not think that it is safe for you to take EC, you can ask why. A medically and factually accurate reason must be documented in your medical record.

